

AUG 22 2003

Attorney Docket: 225/49820
PATENT

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE.

Applicants: Robert BJEKOVIC et al.

Serial No.: 09/828,480

Examiner: E. Cole

Filed: April 9, 2001

Art Unit: 1771

Title: COMPONENT WITH AN INNER FABRIC AND PROCESS FOR PRODUCING
SAME

REPLY

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir:

This Reply is being filed in response to the Office Action dated May 15, 2003 (Paper No. 11). Claims 1, 3-25, and 27-29 remain in this application, while claims 2 and 26 were previously canceled. Reconsideration of the application is requested.

Claim 1 as it presently appears in this application defines a process for producing a component with an inner fabric comprising, in addition to others, a melting operation in which a maximum of approximately 10 vol. % of fibers of a plurality of fabric layers is melted. Claim 18, similarly, defines a component comprising fabric layers, and each fabric layer as comprising fibers of which a maximum of approximately 10 vol. % have been melted. The documents relied on by the Examiner, taken as a whole, do not suggest the limitations mentioned above.

As acknowledged by the Examiner, the published European application relied on does not teach that fibers of reinforcing layers 3, 3', 3a, should partially melt during molding. In fact, nothing in the disclosure of the European application relied on suggests that either the fibers of the reinforcing layers or the reinforcing layers 3, 3', 3a themselves melt at all. The published European application relied on instead discloses only that the melting point of a sealing layer 5, 5' is lower than the melting point of each of the thermoplastic films 4, 4'; neither the sealing layers 5, 5' nor the thermoplastic films 4, 4' appear to include fibers.

In section 2 on pages 2-3 of the Office Action, the Examiner refers specifically to lines 39-45 in column 7 of the Stricker et al. patent. These lines disclose that needle webs (from which decorative layer 3 and backing 4 are made) are joined to a polypropylene sheet 2 by thermal bonding. These lines further specify that individual fibers or agglomerated fibers, which are located on the side of the needle webs facing the polypropylene sheet 2, are sintered to the surface of that sheet. Nothing in column 7, lines 39-45 of the Stricker et al. patent, and nothing anywhere else in the Stricker et al. patent, suggests modifying the laminate forming the subject matter of the published European application relied on so that a maximum of approximately 10 vol. % of the fibers in layers 3, 3', 3a are melted.

The Examiner asserts, on page 3 of the Office Action, that "Stricker teaches that the amount of fibers to be melted should

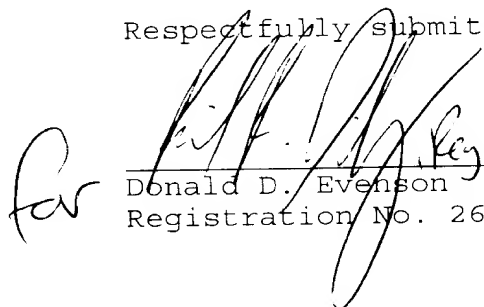
be optimized during the fabrication process" There is nothing, however, in either the disclosure provided by the published European application or the Stricker et al. patent suggesting that optimized melting of fibers in the laminate forming the subject matter of the European application would be a maximum of approximately 10 vol. % of fibers in a plurality of fabric layers as claim 1 requires or a maximum of approximately 10 vol. % in each fabric layer as claim 18 requires.

It is respectfully submitted that both claim 1 and claim 18, as they presently appear in this application, are patentable for reasons discussed above. The rest of the claims remaining in this application are dependent claims and are patentable as well.

This application is presently in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner have any questions after considering this Reply, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: August 22, 2003

for  Pat. Reg. No 32,390,
Donald D. Evenson
Registration No. 26,160

CROWELL & MORING LLP
P.O. Box 14300
Washington, D.C. 20044-4300
Telephone No.: (202) 624-2500
Facsimile No.: (202) 628-8844
DDE:RRD:msy